

Appl. No. : Not Yet Assigned
Filed : Herewith

REMARKS

In response to the Final Office Action mailed April 18, 2003, Applicant has filed a continuation application and this Preliminary Amendment.

By the previous Office Action, the Examiner indicated the rejection of Claims 1, 5-6, 8-17, 19 and 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Acres et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,655,961) in view of Miura (U.S. Patent No. 6,322,451).

Applicant notes that the present claims, Claims 2-10, differ substantially from the previously presented claims and are believed to be patentable over these references. Because these claims incorporate many of the limitations of the previously pending claims, however, Applicant wishes to address certain issues raised by the Examiner regarding certain of the commonly claimed subject matter.

In the Office Action mailed April 18, 2003, the Examiner maintains that Acres discloses a bi-directional communication link, since such communications are required to implement player tracking and bonus awards. Applicant agrees that in Acres, the gaming machines can communicate with the floor controllers, and vice versa. In some sense, this communication may be referred to as "bi-directional." However, as claimed previously and herein, the term "bi-directional" is applied to a network loop, whereby gaming devices may communicate with one another in either direction around the network or communication loop.

With respect to this "loop" configuration, the Examiner acknowledges in the April 18, 2003, Office Action that "Acres is silent towards the type of network involved." This statement appears

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to be in direct contradiction with the Examiner's basis of rejection wherein the Examiner states that "Acres discloses a . . . system being in a closed loop or "daisy chain" network, the host communication device and the communication interface associated with each gaming device configured to bi-directionally communicate data along the communication loop in either the first or second direction." Applicant does not understand how Acres can be at the same time silent as to the type of network and at the same time disclose a particular "daisy chain" configuration.

More importantly, Acres does disclose a particular network configuration. As explained in great detail in Applicant's previous Response to Office Action mailed February 11, 2003, Acres discloses (1) a main gaming network (38) which is an Ethernet network having a point-to-point configuration; and (2) a current loop network including floor controllers, the current loop network simply defining an "on/off" communication status. Neither of these Acres network is a bi-directional, loop network.

As detailed by the Applicant, the "bi-directional loop network" as claimed has the inherent benefit that a break in the communication link does not prevent communications from continuing around the remainder of the loop. For example, in Applicant's network, a break in the communication loop between two gaming machines prevents data from being transmitted over the broken link between the machines, but still permits data to flow between the machines around the remainder of the loop through the host.

As indicated in Applicant's previous response, a break in Acres' current loop or Ethernet networks as disclosed would prevent further communications, evidencing that these networks are

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not of the "bi-directional closed loop" configuration as claimed. If the Examiner disagrees with Applicant's conclusion in this regard, Applicant would appreciate the Examiner providing a more detailed and consistent explanation of the Acres' network and its functionality, including how communications continue with each and every machine in Acres once the current loop or Ethernet link are severed.

The Examiner indicates that "it is inferred that Acres is using conventional types of networks involved." However, as detailed above, Applicant asserts that this inference is contrary to the particular configuration which Acres actually discloses. The particular configurations disclosed are an Ethernet point-to-point network and a current-loop network, and not a "daisy-chain" bi-directional network.

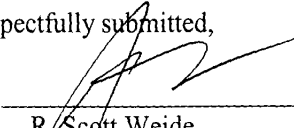
Summary

Applicant asserts that Claims 2-10 are in a condition for allowance and respectfully requests a notice as to the same. If any matters remain outstanding, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: September 16, 2003

By: _____


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